3/15/88 R 93-72-2

Refugee Reports

A Project of the American Council for Nationalities Service
815 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 610 Washington, DC 20005 (202) 667-0782

Volume IX, Number 2 February 26, 1988

[Refugee Reports staff writer Court Robinson returned this week from Thailand, where he was part of a U.S. Committee for Refugees team dispatched to investigate the serious threat to Indochinese asylum seekers there. This article provides an account of events during the last few weeks in the country. Next month, part two of the article will provide an analysis of the policies which led to the crisis, and of attempts to bring it to an end.]

VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN THAILAND FACE FIRST-ASYLUM CRISIS

The warning signs were clear. Vietnamese refugee boat arrivals in Thailand jumped from 3,900 in 1986 to nearly 12,000 in 1987. Seventy percent of the new arrivals came by way of a relatively safe route overland partway through Cambodia followed by a short boat ride from the port of Kompong Som to the east coast of Thailand. Particularly disturbing to Thai officials was the fact that well-organized smuggling operations were dropping the Vietnamese on Thailand's eastern beaches for fees averaging $1,500 per person.

East coast boat arrivals were 1,351 in November, 1,591 in December, and climbed to over 2,000 in January, according to UN figures. Then, Thailand's long-standing patience and generosity, which have enabled them to grant refuge to nearly one million Indochinese refugees in the last 12 years, seemed to collapse.

On January 27, a boat carrying 40 Vietnamese asylum seekers was forced back into international waters by Marine Police in Thailand's easternmost province of Trat. The next day, the Minister of the Interior (MOI) announced that all Vietnamese boats heading toward Thailand would be pushed back to sea. In the month that followed, more than 550 people were pushed back in at least nine separate incidents in the east, more than 100 people died, and another 530 were left stranded without adequate food, water, and shelter on several islands off the coast of Trat.

Thailand has since announced that Vietnamese reaching Thai territory will no longer be forced back and that assistance will be provided to the island group, pending a transfer to the mainland. But, it appears that first-asylum conditions for new Vietnamese

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arrivals will be greatly restricted, and the maintenance of a naval blockade along Thailand's eastern maritime border raises fears that, though the worst may be over, lives are still at risk.

Pushbacks Begin The origins of the Vietnamese first-asylum crisis can be traced to many factors beyond the tripling of boat arrivals. "Thailand is feeling besieged on all of its borders," said one U.S. Embassy official in mid-February, citing Muslim extremists and communist insurgents on the Malaysian border, hilltribe refugee groups on the Burmese border, a bloody two-month border dispute with Laos, and 280,000 "displaced persons" on the Cambodian border. "Xenophobia is increasing," he said.

But observers say the fuse on Thailand's pushback policy was first lit on December 27, when Interior Minister Prachuap Suntharangkun visited Phanat Nikhom refugee processing center in Chonburi Province, and found the camp crowded with more than 15,000 Vietnamese. Reports on the smuggling networks appeared to implicate some local officials in Trat Province.

The scope of the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) investigation broadened with visits to Ban Vinai, a refugee camp near the Laotian border housing nearly 40,000 Hmong, an ethnic group from the highlands of Laos. On January 6, the secretary-general of the National Security Council, Suwit Suthanakun, announced that smuggling of Vietnamese and Hmong had become a major security problem. "It is therefore necessary," he said, "for Thailand to arrest these illegal immigrants and send them back to their homeland, the same way the United States is doing with Mexicans."

Although no specific new actions were taken to deter Hmong arrivals, on January 17, a blockade of Navy and Marine Police boats was set up along the 30-mile-long maritime border between Thailand and Cambodia, stretching from Ban Hat Lek on the mainland to the southeastern tip of Kut Island.

It is not known how many boats were turned back to Cambodia, but Vietnamese continued to arrive in Thailand. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) counted about 1,600 people in beach shelters in the neighboring provinces of Trat and Chantaburi as January drew to a close. If it was determined that these people had come by way of Cambodia, MOI later announced, they would be considered "land Vietnamese" and sent to Site 2 in Prachinburi Province on the Thai-Cambodian border, already home to more than 3,000 Vietnamese who had made the journey from Vietnam entirely by land.

Thai and U.S. government sources agree that the MOI acted independently in pushing back the first boatload of Vietnamese on January 27, but press editorials and public response were strongly supportive of the initiative. "When the majority of the Thai people, members of the House of Representatives as well as the media call for tough action to stop the influx, the government simply cannot ignore them," Suwit said.

The next day, MOI Deputy Permanent Secretary Somporn Klinpongsa confirmed that any Vietnamese boat headed for Thailand and any Laotians crossing the border will be sent back. "We have to close our door," he said, "but the door may not be totally closed." Suwit told a Thai reporter that he had not been informed in advance of the MOI decision to push back the 40, and suggested that policy was still in a state of flux. "When the situation changes, there may be changes in the policy," he said, adding two days later, "Once the situation returns to normal, we may return to former methods."

First Loss of Life is Reported On January 29, according to a letter of protest sent by UNHCR to Suwit, a Thai fishing trawler rammed a boat carrying 22 Vietnamese asylum seekers headed for Khlong Yai in Trat Province. Several gasoline canisters caught fire on the boat. Seven people were killed, two abducted, eight swam to shore where several were hospitalized with severe burns, and five were reported missing and presumed dead. One of the burn victims later died in the hospital.

The blockade was expanded on January 31, as 50 private fishing boats were enlisted to begin patrolling the beaches in Khlong Yai District, about one mile from shore. Marine Police continued to sweep coastal waters three miles out as Navy boats cruised the deep sea. In the three days that followed, Thai newspapers documented pushbacks of at least 371 people, and on February 2, the Thai newspaper, Ban Muang, reported

that around 80 bodies had washed up on the beaches near Ban Hat Lek. A Thai district official identified some of the dead as having been among groups of Vietnamese pushed back in five boats a few days earlier.

Crisis on the Islands MOI crackdowns continued on officials perceived to be either ineffective in stopping the boat influx or actually implicated in the smuggling operations. On February 4, Thongdam Banchuen, the governor of Trat, was ordered to be transferred, one day after five high-ranking officials were transferred from the province. MOI also called for the prosecution of 17 Thai racketeers in Trat for smuggling of refugees and contraband goods. One police report suggested that Thai smugglers had netted more than 70 million baht, about $2.7 million in the refugee traffic alone.

On February 8, Prachuap banned the entry of all asylum seekers into Thailand. "It is necessary to prevent the influx not only of the Indochinese immigrants, but also of other nationals because they can endanger our national security and create social problems." Despite this comprehensive ban, reports at the time still indicated no specific deterrent activities undertaken against other refugee and immigrant groups or against Vietnamese outside the east coast region.

The pushback and interdiction efforts were reducing arrivals in Trat and elsewhere on the mainland, according to MOI, although reports from relief workers and fishermen in the region indicated that there was a growing number of Vietnamese stranded on a cluster of Thai islands off the Trat coastline. On February 9, a team of relief workers visited Kut Island and counted about 280 Vietnamese in at least four separate locations. They supplied rice and dried fish to one group of 71 sheltered at a police station in a place called, ominously enough, Ao Salat, or Pirate's Bay.

In the ten days that followed, UNHCR and an informal network of relief agencies continued to sweep the more than 52 islands off Trat, locating groups and providing emergency assistance. Their work was hampered by the fact that, although local and provincial officials were aware of the refugees' presence, any formal acknowledgement of that fact might have invited MOI censure

Nguyen Trong, along with four other young men, left Vietnam by boat on February 5. Somewhere off the coast of Thailand his boat was rammed repeatedly by a fishing trawler. He swam to Rang Yai Island where he had survived for six days, fed occasionally by local Thai fishermen, when he was found on February 15 by a USCR/Embassy team. He did not know the fate of his friends.

Photo Credit: USCR/Court Robinson

A CHRONOLOGY OF THAILAND'S ASYLUM CRISIS

December 27 Thailand's Minister of the Interior, Gen. Prachuap Suntharangkun, visits Phanat Nikhom refugee processing center, housing more than 15,000 Vietnamese. He is briefed on the general smuggling operations in Trat province involving refugees and contraband goods and threatens to transfer any officials who are unable to stem the boat flows.

January 6 Secretary-General of the National Security Council, Suwit Suthanakun, asserts in a press interview that refugee smuggling, principally involving Vietnamese and Hmong, has become a major problem.

January 17 A fleet of Navy and Marine Police boats is deployed along the 30-mile-long maritime border between Thailand and Cambodia, stretching from Ban Hat Lek on the mainland to the southeastern tip of Kut Island. "The operation will sharply bring down the number of refugees landing in the province," says Thongdam Banchuen, governor of Trat Province.

January 26 Gen. Prachuap assigns MOI Deputy Permanent Secretary Somporn Klinpongsa to investigate the refugee smuggling rackets.

Marine Police intercept a trawler carrying 25 Vietnamese as it attempts to land on Kut Island. Two Cambodian smugglers are arrested and the Vietnamese are escorted to a detention center in Trat pending an investigation.

January 27 Somporn leads an interagency team to Trat Province.

Marine Police escort a boat carrying 40 Vietnamese back into Cambodian waters, 18 hours after it had arrived in Khlong Yai. Reporters are invited from Bangkok to cover the event.

January 28 MOI announces that all Vietnamese boats headed for Thailand will be pushed back to sea. Laotians crossing into Thailand will also be repatriated.

"We have to close our door," says Somporn, "but the door may not be totally closed." Editorials in several Thai newspapers all vigorously support the new policy.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issues a statement that, "While we recognize that the government must carry out law enforcement measures, these should not compromise the humanitarian principles governing the treatment of refugees."

January 29 According to a UNHCR letter of protest sent to NSC chief Suwit, a Thai fishing trawler rams a boat carrying 22 Vietnamese off the coast of Khlong Yai, setting fire to several gasoline canisters on board. Seven are killed, two abducted, and eight manage to swim to shore, one of whom later dies in the hospital. Five are missing, presumed dead.

January 30 Fifty fishing boats are deputized to begin patrols one mile offshore from Khlong Yai district. Marine Police continue to sweep the coastline three miles out, with the Navy patrolling further out.

A total of 71 people in three boats are pushed out to sea.

February 1 Three hundred villagers stage a rally outside the district hall in Khlong Yai, demanding that Vietnamese boat people be sent back, and accusing UNHCR officials of encouraging continued inflows.

February 2 A Thai newspaper reports that more than 80 bodies of Vietnamese have washed ashore near Ban Hat Lek. A district official identifies some of the dead as being among those pushed back on five boats earlier in the week.

About 300 boat arrivals are pushed back from Khlong Yai.

MOI turns down a request by U.S. officials to open new facilities for Vietnamese refugees. "The government's policy is to reduce the number of refugee holding centers," says Somporn.

"We don't want our country to be regarded as the country of first acceptance because, in fact, the refugees could remain unattended to for 10 or even 20 years."

February 4 MOI orders the transfer of the Trat governor, one day after transferring 5 ranking police officers in the province. "Any governors or provincial officials who tolerate the influx of Vietnamese refugees will be replaced," says Prachuap.

February 5 The commissioner of the Central Intelligence Bureau announces that the Marine Police have been ordered to push back Vietnamese boat arrivals throughout the country.

Marine Police in Khlong Yai add five more vessels to the coastal patrols, bringing their total to eight.

MOI calls for the prosecution of 17 Thai racketeers in Trat for smuggling refugees and contraband goods.

The first U.S. Embassy/Joint Voluntary Agency team visits the east coast for two days.

February 8 Prachuap bans the entry of all asylum seekers into Thailand. "It is necessary to prevent the influx not only of the Indochinese immigrants but also of other nationals because they can endanger our national security and create social problems. Other nations should not interfere with our internal matters. If the U.S. government wants to give sanctuary to Vietnamese refugees, they can go ahead."

A group of 365 Vietnamese in Trat, who arrived prior to January 29, is transferred to Kamput camp in Chantaburi Province, pending relocation to Site 2.

February 9 A team of relief workers visits Kut island and counts about 280 Vietnamese in at least four locations.

About 63 Vietnamese are removed from a beach shelter at Mairut and pushed out to sea in three boats without motors. Two people reportedly try to swim back to shore and are shot.

February 11 Two groups of Vietnamese, one numbering 50 and the other 53, are pushed off from Khlong Hin in Trat Province. A U.S. Embassy team visits Chang Island and Salak Island, counting 145 people and providing assistance.

February 12 An investigative team organized by the U.S. Committee for Refugees arrives in Thailand. The team is to report to the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs upon its return to the U.S.

February 13 A boatload of 21 Vietnamese is pushed off from the west coast province of Prachuap Khirikhan, after having been reprovisioned with gas, food, and water.

February 15 Thai authorities report that between January 29 and February 12, 503 of the 606 Vietnamese who entered Thai waters have been pushed back. Of the others, 14 have been charged with illegal immigration and 89 are being held in detention centers pending a transfer to Site 2.

February 16 Relief workers locate 21 Vietnamese on Mak Island. A woman and her baby die in childbirth on Chang Island.

About 300 villagers gather at Khlong Yai city hall to protest the resignation of Prasert Siri, who had resigned the previous day as village headman and district official of Ban Hat Lek.

Prasert gives a speech in which he says that last year his orders were to receive all Vietnamese, "but suddenly the orders changed and we are supposed to push off refugees.... We did it a couple of times.... I was in tears. Furthermore, they ordered me to kill them. If there aren't investigations for the truth to be revealed, I will surely resign." Another 73 officials threaten to resign in sympathy.

February 19 The NSC grants UNHCR access to the islands off Trat. Assistance to the 530 people is to be provided through Thai relief agencies, and medical evacuations to mainland hospitals will be permitted.

Foreign Minister Siddhi Savetsila says that Thailand will not push back refugees who have landed, but adds, "From now on, we shall not discuss the issue with other countries and will let the UNHCR deal with our Interior Ministry."

February 21 Suwit announces that Vietnamese boat people who have arrived in Thailand since January 1 will be deprived resettlement opportunities and transferred to Site 2. "We have informed the UNHCR of our decision to move the Vietnamese to Site 2, and asked them to provide food, shelter, and other necessities."

[Editor's Note: Reports through the end of February indicated that the Thai government policy of pushbacks and of interdiction at sea continued.]

A group of 77 Vietnamese were brought to Salak Island by "uniformed men" on February 8, having arrived on another Thai island two days earlier. They had been given food. water, and medicine by local Thais and relief workers. On February 14, they were moved to Kut Island and later to Rang Yai.

The entire group had come by way of the smuggling route through Cambodia. Their leader, Dang Viet Kien, a U.S.-trained Navy lieutenant, said he had heard a Voice of America radio broadcast saying that asylum had ended in Thailand, but the local rumors were that people could still get through.

The smuggling system, with some variations, basically involves the following: Would-be escapees pay a downpayment in gold of approximately $500 per person (half that amount for children) to a Vietnamese middleman. The balance of $1,000 or more is paid to these same middlemen by friends or relatives when the escapees reach safety in Thailand. They are escorted through Cambodia by Vietnamese guides, often paying small bribes at checkpoints along the way. The basic route takes them along Highway 1 from Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) to Phnom Penh and then down Highway 4 to the port of Kompong Som where they board a shuttle boat to Thailand. The trip normally takes anywhere from several days to two weeks.

Photo Credit: USCR/Court Robinson

and possible pushbacks.

By February 18, a total of 520 people were receiving some form of assistance in 10 different locations. All but 113 were on Kut Island, though there were unconfirmed reports of 80 to 95 more people on Chang Island. Although the single greatest concern for the island groups was the risk of pushbacks, medical problems were growing more acute. A doctor who visited several of the groups counted 39 people, out of 172, in need of medical attention, 4 of whom required hospitalization. The doctor cited malaria, diarrhea, and dehydration as the three major problems, with sewage and sanitation of serious concern as well.

"We should not forget the stress this is placing on Thai villagers nearby," the doctor said. "They are often sharing their limited food and water supplies, they may face possible legal repercussions for this assistance, and there are medical risks as well. If the refugees get sick with malaria or cholera, this could spread to local Thais." The relief physician said that the majority of Thai villagers had been very supportive and helpful, although some felt resentment at the attention the Vietnamese were getting. "Everywhere we went, we provided health care to the local Thais, as well," she said.

On February 19, the NSC formally granted access to UNHCR to assist the island Vietnamese, and allowed for medical evacuations of individual patients pending a transfer of the entire group to the mainland. Since then, the U.S. embassy in Thailand reports that all Vietnamese on the islands, numbering 530 as of February 24, are being consolidated on the previously uninhabited island of Rang Yai, since it has a fresh water supply.

On February 21, NSC chief Suwit announced that all Vietnamese who arrived via Cambodia since the beginning of the year will be considered "land Vietnamese" and transferred to Site 2 on the Thai-Cambodian border where they will be deprived of the right to resettlement in third countries. Although he did not specify groups, it is assumed that this will include the 530 on Rang Yai Island, 1,592 people in beach shelters in Trat and Chantaburi, as well as 365 Vietnamese who were moved from Khlong Yai to Kamput camp on February 8.

"We have informed the UNHCR of our decision to move the Vietnamese to Site 2, and asked them to provide food, shelter and other necessities to them," said Suwit. He rejected a UNHCR proposal to open camps in Kap Cherng, Kamput, or Sikhiu, saying that it would encourage more Vietnamese to arrive.

A February 23 telegram from seven U.S. voluntary agencies in Thailand to the House Subcommitee on Asian and Pacific Affairs urged that the move to Site 2 should not take place. "Virtually every report or study made on Site 2 over the past two years has strongly recommended major relocations of the camp's population to improve the dangerous and unmanageable conditions currently in evidence," the telegram said. "We submit that this danger is even more acute for the Vietnamese population in the camp."

Thai and U.S. government sources expect that Phanat Nikhom soon will be officially closed to new arrivals, and that Thailand will request third-country resettlement for all Vietnamese residents. Meanwhile, the fate of new arrivals remains uncertain with the naval blockade still in place in the east, and pushbacks still occurring in Thailand's southern provinces.

Recent Developments

REFUGEE EMERGENCY IN THAILAND, U.S. COMMITMENTS TO REGION SCRUTINIZED IN CONGRESSIONAL HEARING

Congress took a long, hard look at the situation facing Vietnamese boat people in a February 24 hearing of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.

Subcommittee Chairman Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.) opened the hearing by saying that it would "look into recent tragic events in Thailand which cost the lives of over 100 Vietnamese refugees and sent shock waves across this nation." He said that the hearing would try to determine "what the United States and the international community should be doing to reassure Thailand of our commitment to its security and well being."

Solarz said, "This committee and the Congress has no intention of seeing Thailand or other nations of first asylum unfairly burdened by refugees."

Private witnesses included Le Xuan Khoa, president of the Indochina Resource Action Center (IRAC), Roger Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR), and Al Santoli and Shepard Lowman, who had recently returned from a USCR fact-finding mission to Thailand. The government witnesses were Gaston Sigur, assistant secretary of state, Jonathan Moore, U.S. coordinator for refugee affairs, and William Brown, ambassador to Thailand, who came from Thailand to testify at the hearing.

[Because this month's lead story is Refugee Reports' own eyewitness account of the situation in Thailand, this article will not report the findings of the witnesses about developments in Thailand, but will focus on "the Washington perspective" and policy implications of these events.]

Reps. Chester G. Atkins (D-Mass.) and Jim Leach (R-Iowa) pushed private and government witnesses alike to predict the possible loss of life if U.S. resettlement commitments drop and first asylum in Thailand is lost. The private witnesses predicted the termination of first asylum in Malaysia and Indonesia as well, and estimated loss of life in the thousands, including not only Vietnamese boat people, but also Hmong refugees attempting to cross from Laos.

The government witnesses insisted that the United States would meet its resettlement commitments, but concurred in the assessment that a hypothetical diminution of U.S. resettlement would damage first asylum and put refugee lives at risk. Brown said, "The Thai response to that situation would be that we had reneged.... It would impact on their attitude toward new arrivals...and intensify pushbacks on a number of fronts--Hmong as well as boat arrivals--and could impact on anti-piracy efforts as well."

The major area of controversy between the private and government witnesses was the extent to which they considered the situation as described by Atkins as hypothetical or actual.

U.S. refugee coordinator, Moore, said, "I reject the notion of a shortfall in numbers." He said that he had "fought repeatedly" and was still "actively engaged" in an effort to resist lowering the FY 88 admissions ceiling for Southeast Asia. While acknowledging that "I can't promise we will reach the ceiling," Moore said that "it will not be anywhere near" the level of shortfall predicted by the private witnesses. "I know more about this than the private panelists," he said.

USCR's Winter said, "We believe the U.S. resettlement process has been deliberately managed so as to significantly fall short of FY 88 ceilings for Southeast Asia."

Winter said that the rapidly accelerating rate of boat arrivals in Thailand was known well before last year's consultations between Congress and the Administration on FY 88 admissions numbers, yet there was no focus on those developments in determining the projected needs for the year. In fact, Winter said, the Senate Judiciary Committee wrote a letter to President Reagan in September saying that Southeast Asian numbers may need to be used to cover additional admissions from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

A Shortfall in Southeast Asian Refugee Admissions Winter calculated that only about 8 percent of the admissions ceilings for Southeast Asia had been utilized through the first quarter of FY 88. He said that USCR's analysis of the current admissions' pipeline indicated that less than 24,000 of

the 29,500 places reserved for first asylum countries in the region would be used this year, if current trends continue.

Atkins said that he was aware of discussions calling for the reduction of this year's East Asian first-asylum numbers by 4,500 and a 500 reduction in Orderly Departure Program (ODP) numbers.

Leach added that the Administration's budget for FY 89 called for a reduction of East Asian admissions by 6,000. He said, "The thought of cutting back numbers is immoral. The case for increasing numbers is very persuasive."

Leach said that it was "totally unconscionable to drift into this policy." He added, "If ever there was an instance to exercise the emergency powers of the Refugee Act, this is it." Leach told the government witnesses that he was particularly troubled by a policy that pits one refugee group against another. He suggested that the United States should "hold firm" on Southeast Asian numbers and that Congress would "move expeditiously" to admit greater numbers from the Soviet Union.

U.S. refugee coordinator, Moore, said that getting authorization for additional admissions numbers would be "no problem," but that the real problem would be "getting dollars to pay for the numbers."

Atkins said that new money won't be there in FY 88 to support State Department calls for higher refugee admissions numbers. "Vietnamese and Hmong will suffer to save a few dollars." He added, "The OMB [Office of Management and Budget] numbers are going to lead to people losing their lives."

Moore said that the FY 89 budget process is "just beginning" and that "we may be able to get more numbers above that 23,500." He also said that there was a possibility of transferring funds within the budgeted $340 million for the refugee program to allow more money to be devoted to refugee admissions.

Moore Willing to Engage Emergency Powers of Refugee Act Atkins pressed the government witnesses on the severity of the refugee problem in Southeast Asia. When he asked, "Do we have an emergency in Southeast Asia?" all three government panelists responded affirmatively.

Moore said that he would convene the "senior interdepartmental group" on refugees so that a proposal for engaging the emergency provisions of the Refugee Act to increase the refugee admissions ceiling could be considered.

[Several other important refugee policy issues were raised in the hearing, including the ODP and processing of recently released re-education camp inmates. These topics are discussed in a related Recent Development article.]

SOVIET EMIGRATION INCREASE, SOUTHEAST ASIA CRISIS--THE REFUGEE ADMISSIONS NUMBERS GAME

A dramatic increase in the number of Jews and Armenians being permitted to exit the Soviet Union comes at the same time that maintaining significant resettlement opportunities for Southeast Asians has become critical (see lead story).

Lost in the shuffle have been Iranian refugees in Turkey, Salvadorans and Nicaraguans in Honduras, Ethiopians in Djibouti and Sudan, and refugees in other countries where the welcome of the host government is uncertain and for whom resettlement to third countries such as the United States could be life-saving.

While it is still uncertain whether funds will be made available for enlarging total worldwide refugee admissions, there are indications that the existing FY 88 pie could be sliced in ways that will take significant admissions numbers away from the regional ceilings for East Asia, the Near East/South Asia, Africa, and Latin America/Caribbean, while giving a major boost to the Eastern Europe/USSR region. And just-released FY 89 budget requests show the same shift.

The annual limit on the number of refugees to be admitted in FY 88 has been set at 72,500 (which includes an unfunded "unallocated reserve" of 4,000).

Admissions Fall Short in First Quarter There have already been significant shortfalls in first quarter FY 88 refugee admissions for several regions of the world. (See chart, page 16) Most notably, only 3,329 refugees have been admitted from Southeast Asia, 8.7 percent of the 38,000 annual regional ceiling for East Asia. Other regions that typically have had shortfalls in recent years, Latin America

and Africa, continued to admit far fewer refugees than their regional ceilings would allow. Unlike last year, when the rate of first quarter admissions from the Near East/South Asia region was running ahead of the regional ceiling (which was subsequently revised upwards), this year, the rate of Afghan, Iranian, and Iraqi admissions in the first quarter has fallen behind the rate that would meet the annual regional ceiling.

The only region that has been oversubscribed in the first quarter of the year is the Eastern Europe/USSR region, which has already used one-third of its allotted places for the year. More than 60 percent of the 5,014 admissions from the region have come from the Soviet Union. In fact, the 3,226 Soviet admissions in the first quarter of FY 88 are roughly equivalent to the 3,694 Soviet admissions for all of FY 87.

An American Council for Nationalities Service (ACNS) analysis of FY 88 Southeast Asian admissions based on first quarter arrivals, authorization for processing through Immigration and Naturalization Service approval, direct departures, and transfers to, and "graduations" from, the Refugee Processing Centers predicts a total of 32,279 Southeast Admissions this year, a shortfall of 5,721, if current trends continue.

Southeast Asian Shortfall Foreseen

Although the Thai interdiction operation has added a dramatic element to the resettlement picture, the fall in admissions numbers was being discussed as early as last year. A joint letter to President Reagan from the leaders of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Immigration and Refugee Affairs Subcommittee on September 29 stated, "additional numbers will likely be needed for Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union [in FY 88], as well as for the Near East and South Asia. Numbers not needed for Southeast Asia may need to be programmed to meet additional needs in these areas by mid-year."

The letter from Senators Kennedy, Simpson, Biden, and Thurmond not only assumed a short-fall in Southeast Asian admissions and a reallocation of those numbers to the Eastern Europe/USSR region, but it also advocated such a move.

The letter requested that only half of the East Asia allocation for first asylum be used before mid-year consultations. The senators said, "The Committee is also doubtful, based upon our latest field reports, that the 29,500 'ceiling' requested for 'first asylum' cases in Southeast Asia is justified without it becoming a 'quota,' for which pressures then build to fill."

However, boat arrivals in 1987 were significantly higher than 1986, making the field reports upon which the senators based their recommendations questionable. In all, nearly 13,000 Vietnamese boat people arrived in Thailand in calendar year 1987, a 300 percent increase over 1986. In June, boat arrivals were 600 percent higher than the previous June.

Additional FY 88 Numbers or Shortfall?

Additional numbers of refugees can be admitted under the Refugee Act of 1980 in the event of an "unforeseen emergency refugee situation" based on "grave humanitarian concerns" or "the national interest."

There were indications at the February 24 hearing before the House East Asia and Pacific Subcommittee that the U.S. Coordinator for Refugees would call for such a presidential determination.

However, if this effort does not succeed, State Department sources have indicated that a shortfall of 4,500 first asylum and 500 Orderly Departure Program (ODP) numbers could be "managed" for FY 88--figures mentioned by Rep. Chester Atkins (D-Mass.) at the February 24 hearing as well.

Sources in the State Department anticipated a shortfall of 2,000 numbers from the Near East/South Asia; 500 from Latin America; and 1,500 from Africa.

The total of 9,000 resettlement numbers taken from the other regions would be reallocated to the Eastern Europe/USSR region, according to the plan.

FY 89 Budget Proposals Show Drop in Refugee Admissions Outside Europe On February 18, the Administration's proposed budget for FY 89 was made public. The proposed regional ceilings are roughly equivalent to the numbers being discussed as a possible FY 88 reallocation, if no emergency numbers are authorized.

The FY 89 request is as follows:

East Asia	
First Asylum	23,500
ODP	8,500
Subtotal	32,000
USSR/E. Europe	25,500
Western Hemisphere	3,000
Africa	1,500
Total	68,500

A statement issued with the FY 89 budget request said, "These levels of admissions are necessary to respond to diplomatic achievements with respect to the Soviet emigration; an improved Orderly Departure Program for Vietnam including Amerasian departures; the resumption of the migration agreement with Cuba; and to ongoing needs in Southeast Asia and other regions." The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), in the Department of Health and Human Services, meanwhile, has made a budget request based on the expected arrival in FY 89 of 51,000 refugees.

Bill Gee, director of ORR, told Refugee Reports that the 51,000 figure was "strictly based on the money we had assigned to us for FY 89 by the OMB [Office of Management and Budget] budget people."

When Atkins asked Jonathan Moore, the U.S. coordinator for refugees, about the shortfall in admissions numbers implied by the ORR budget at the February 24 hearing, Moore replied, "I have seen those figures, but I can't explain them."

REFUGEES, ETHNIC GROUPS PRESENT UNITED FRONT IN NUMBERS CRUNCH

"It's a cruel choice, and an unnecessary one." So said a February 17 New York Times editorial about the prospect of reallocating refugee admissions numbers from Southeast Asia to the Soviet Union in order to accommodate increased Jewish and Armenian emigration.

Despite seeming to be pitted against each other for limited admission numbers, the refugee groups and the U.S.-based ethnic constituencies have presented a remarkably united front.

On February 19, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the Indochina Resource Action Center (IRAC) issued a joint statement saying, "We firmly believe that shifting numbers is not the proper answer. Both groups are deserving and of particular concern to the United States."

The joint AJC/IRAC statement called upon the United States to invoke the emergency provisions of the Refugee Act of 1980 and to provide supplemental funding to meet the humanitarian and foreign policy needs.

Ross Vartian, executive director of the Armenian Assembly of America, told Refugee Reports, "Competition for the same numbers is dehumanizing." He added, "No Armenian wants to quantify tragedy, to say we are better or worse off. We don't want to see a Vietnamese boat person turned away because of the admission of an Armenian."

Vartian said that no refugee should be penalized for the U.S. negotiating success with the Soviet Union, which suddenly is allowing significant numbers of Jews and Armenians to exit the country. "This is what a negotiating success costs--to accommodate those wishing to leave. But it does not displace refugees from other regions. That is not what was negotiated."

On February 5, Karl Zukerman, executive vice president of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), cabled Secretary of State George Shultz, also expressing the concern of his organization about the dangers facing Southeast Asian refugees, while applauding the foreign policy success of the Reagan Administration that has resulted in more exit permits from the Soviet Union/Eastern Europe than the current ceiling can allow.

"HIAS urges you to avoid the transfer of numbers between regional categories," the cable said. It also called for exercising the emergency provisions of the Refugee Act and supplemental funding.

Within the East Asia region itself other Indochinese refugee groups have shown solidarity with Vietnamese boat people as they face their current emergency. Hmong, Lao, and Cambodian groups throughout the country wrote letters to Congress and the Administration on behalf of the Vietnamese.

Siong Koua Vanchiasong, director of the Lao Family Community in Decatur, Georgia, perhaps best expressed this exile solidarity in a February 11 letter to Shultz. After describing the situation faced by Vietnamese boat people for the Secretary of State and making a series of recommendations to improve protection for Vietnamese refugees,

Indochinese refugees hold rally in Washington, D.C. The sign says, "Thousands and thousands of Vietnamese boat people are threatened in Thailand's seas."
Photo Credit: Quan Hoang

the Lao community leader reminded him that "reconsidering Cambodians in Khao I Dang who have been rejected for U.S. resettlement and seeking to open orderly departure opportunities from Laos, would also help release the pressure Thailand now feels."

NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON AMERASIANS, RE-EDUCATION PRISONERS

On January 20, Hanoi reportedly told two visiting U.S. Congressmen--Robert Mrazek (D-N.Y.) and Thomas Ridge (R-Pa.)--that it was interested in having all Amerasians in Vietnam leave for the United States in the next two years. According to the Washington Post, Deputy Premier Nguyen Co Thach "pledged the full commitment of Vietnam to the two-year deadline and indicated he hoped the program could be completed in one year."

The announcement is seen as a result of legislation that Mrazek introduced and that passed last December as part of a federal continuing spending resolution. Designed to speed U.S. admissions of Amerasians--children of U.S. servicemen and Vietnamese mothers--the law has a two-year life span and takes effect March 21.

It would appear that Amerasian departures from Vietnam need a boost. According to the State Department, as of February 23, 2,100 persons--about 40 percent of whom are estimated to be Amerasians, with the remainder their relatives--have entered processing since October. Of that number, only 322 persons have actually left Vietnam, while more than half are on medical hold. Slightly more than 600 individuals, State Department sources told Refugee Reports, had good chances of departing because they were manifested for exit flights. Those flights began last December under a new bilateral Vietnamese/U.S. arrangement, and they have been occurring the last week of every month ever since.

There is no official estimate of Amerasians in Vietnam, but a range of 8,000 to 12,000 is often cited. Mrazek and Ridge reportedly used that number after their Hanoi meeting, and indicated that as many as 18,000 relatives could emigrate along with the Amerasians.

Before any major flow of Amerasians to the United States begins, however, the governments involved are expected to discuss processing and departure procedures. As of late February, such talks had yet to be held, and it was not clear when they would be.

According to the new law, and to State Department implementing instructions, Amerasian admissions under the legislation will not be counted against refugee admissions

numbers or immigrant quotas. The law waives numerical limitations for this group, and funding for their admissions will come from $5 million earmarked in federal funds. Additional funding will probably require supplemental appropriations.

Nevertheless, according to Mrazek assistant Stephen Goose, the law will indirectly affect refugee resettlement since private agencies will face having to care for a new and sizeable caseload.

Hanoi Announces Release of Reeducation Camp Prisoners There was also news from Vietnam about reeducation camp prisoners. On February 11, Hanoi announced a release of re-education prisoners--persons held in prison camp settings for political indoctrination. Approximately 1,000 of the newly freed are believed to be former military or officials of the government of South Vietnam.

Hanoi has indicated that this latest release leaves imprisoned approximately 150 former soldiers and officials.

At a February 24 hearing before the House Asia and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee, Reagan Administration witnesses said that Vietnam was retaining its well-known position that released prisoners would only be allowed to leave on an individual basis, and that for a massive emigration to occur, guarantees were needed first from Washington that former prisoners would not engage in anti-Hanoi subversion.

However, a State Department source told Refugee Reports earlier that top Vietnamese government officials indicated to visiting journalists in January that it would permit former prisoners to leave without conditions. This report was subsequently confirmed by Amnesty International in London.

If prisoners are allowed to resettle, a key question will be how. At the hearing, Roger Winter, director of the U.S. Committee for Refugees, said that private sponsorship of former prisoners--an alternative that has been discussed because of the tight federal budget picture--could raise complicated questions, particularly in the area of medical care.

Le Xuan Khoa, director of the Indochina Resource Action Center, offered to submit resettlement suggestions to the subcommittee after he had conferred with other refugee community leaders.

"Re-education prisoners are a special responsibility" of the United States, subcommittee chairman Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) noted.

Update

° On February 23, The Senate Judiciary Committee approved a legal-immigration bill that would provide for an annual ceiling of 590,000 immigrant visas, of whom 470,000 would be reserved for family immigration and 120,000 for independent immigrants. Refugee admissions would not be subject to the immigration ceiling.

Although the bill represented a compromise between Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate subcommittee on immigration and refugee affairs, and Sen. Alan K. Simpson (R-Wyo.), ranking minority member of the same subcommittee, Simpson reserved the right to offer two amendments when the bill comes before the full Senate--one of which would require the president to submit refugee admissions numbers to Congress three months before the beginning of the fiscal year if he determines that refugee admissions will exceed 50,000.

The amendment Simpson might propose would empower Congress to disapprove the admissions number proposed for the fiscal year through a joint congressional resolution. Under current practice, the Administration is required to consult with Congress regarding refugee admissions, but Congress is not able to veto those numbers.

It is not known whether or not Simpson will introduce such an amendment. No date has been scheduled for consideration of the bill on the Senate floor.

° Several attacks on internally displaced persons in the San Jose de Calle Real camp in El Salvador were reported in January. The camp, which houses about 600 displaced persons, is administered by the Archdiocese of San Salvador. On January 16, 200 Salvadoran soldiers entered the camp in an effort to arrest 15 people believed to be guerrilla sympathizers, but were prevented from doing so, in part, due to the timely intervention of a Catholic bishop. Several days later, international workers at the camp reported that troops surrounded the camp and opened

fire with machine guns and grenades.

A classified cable from the U.S. embassy in San Salvador in December reported that illegal immigration to the United States from El Salvador has not diminished since the signing of the Immigration Reform and Control Act, according to an article by Robert Pear in the New York Times. The cable reportedly found that "illegal immigration to the United States is increasing" and has "risen back to 1984-86 levels."

° As of mid-February, 981,424 aliens had registered for amnesty under the Immigration Reform and Control Act (and 272,868 additional aliens applied as special agricultural workers). A report recently issued by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "The Legalization Countdown: A Third Quarter Assessment," estimated that 1.8 to 2.6 million aliens are eligible for amnesty. The deadline for legalization is May 4.

Projects and Programs

PROGRAM TRAINS REFUGEES IN HUMAN SERVICES COUNSELING

Before Lilia Sorokin started working for the New York City Police Department, Russian-speaking people in Brooklyn were afraid to enter the station house. Now, they come. Many would not have felt welcome if not for the presence of a fellow emigre, one trained in human services counseling to hear them out and help with their problems.

Private and public agencies throughout New York City have benefited from the Training Program in Human Services Counseling for Emigres, which has created a body of refugee paraprofessionals in human services counseling.

The training program, sponsored by the Institute for Child Mental Health, provides a 20-week course for refugees and entrants. Using a social work education format, the 35-hour per week curriculum alternates 2 classroom days with 3 fieldwork days. The course emphasizes building English-as-a-second-language skills, while learning about social services in America and the cultural values on which they are based.

The benefits of the course often continue long after graduation day. Apufia Beko, an Ethiopian school teacher, found the course to be a turning point in her life. "Before I heard about it, I didn't know how to do anything but go to the welfare center. With this program I started going out, getting to know people, to know the city. I am very happy. My job takes me from borough to borough. I have many experiences now and know I can help." Beko now works with the health department immunizing children.

The training helps build confidence as well as skill, according to program director Katharine Schuchman. "You can see a physical difference in the students as they progress with the course. They stand straighter. It puts meaning back into their lives." From the start of the course, the students feel that they really are making a contribution, Schuchman said.

Lan Huynh, a former political prisoner in Vietnam, who arrived in the United States in 1980, spent his first eight months as a factory laborer. "The people were very strict, not friendly," he said. "I was very depressed."

A September 1981 graduate of the course, Huynh now works as a case worker for foster children who arrived as unaccompanied minors through the Refugee/Entrant Assistance Program. "I would like to stay in this job forever," he said. "I am so happy to help these Vietnamese children."

Similar feelings are expressed by Abdul Jamil, an Afghan refugee, who also works in foster care with Southeast Asian minors. "I understand the Vietnamese feelings," he said, "because I remember when I needed help." Jamil, who formerly taught engineering at Kabul University, was driving a taxi before he learned of the course. "The job isn't the only reason I appreciate the course," he said. "It helped me find my way. I appreciate how practical and well-disciplined it was."

Since 1979, 316 bilingual/bicultural paraprofessionals have been trained through this program. More than 100 New York City human services agencies, including resettlement agencies, health and mental health clinics, and educational institutions have provided supervised field work instruction for the trainees.

Graduates of the course receive 10 undergraduate credits from Adelphi University. Many of the graduates of the program continue their college education while working

in the human services field. Huynh, for example, has gone on to earn both bachelor's and master's degrees in social work.

An important aspect of the program has been its success in placing refugees in human services jobs. Sorokin's work with the police department started with her course field work. She started doing translations during her internship, moved on to be a receptionist, and now, still working as a receptionist, has in fact become an all-purpose liaison with the Russian-speaking community. She writes articles for the Russian-language newspaper, makes radio broadcasts, and assists emigres on all aspects of law and crime prevention. She has found that elderly emigres with the least facility in English are particularly drawn to her. "They ask about everything," she said. "I help to make reports, fill out applications, explain laws." She even works with the city's voter registration program to make voting more accessible to New York City's Russian-speaking community.

The program is funded by the Refugee/Entrant Assistance Program of the New York State Department of Social Services.

For more information, contact Katharine Schuchman, program director, Training Program in Human Services Counseling for Emigres, 22 East 28th St., New York, NY 10016. (212) 725-8611.

Current Research

PRIVATE SECTOR ERODED IN U.S. REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT, STUDY FINDS

Private sector involvement in the U.S. refugee resettlement program has eroded due to over-reliance on government public assistance programs and procedures, according to a contract study by the Refugee Policy Group and Lewin and Associates for the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

"The eclipse of the private sector," the report says, "has occurred because potential donors, sponsors and relatives, as well as voluntary agencies and the MAAs [Mutual Assistance Associations--refugee self-help groups] themselves, have come to see resettlement as a public responsibility."

The report, Future Directions in the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, contends that private sector groups that historically have played a vital role in refugee resettlement have developed the expectation that the government will provide adequate funding and other support. "Few agencies see themselves as having a responsibility to develop alternative funding sources or develop the interest of mainstream agencies in refugee-related matters," the report observes.

In short, the report finds, the refugee program at all levels has organized itself around the administration of welfare benefits to the point where "it has transformed itself into a welfare focused program."

Among the reasons listed for the decline in private sector resources, the report says, are:

- the failure of many private agencies to develop sponsorships and volunteers or provide encouragement to donors;
- the competition for resources emanating from new refugee crises and emergencies overseas;
- concerns that cash and medical assistance costs would be greater than the private sector could bear; and
- the increased proportion of refugees who are joining family members who are already living in this country.

Report Could Have Important Policy Impact

The report promises to play a role as policymakers begin to consider reauthorization of the Refugee Act. ORR Director Bill Gee said, "The conclusions and recommendations [of Future Directions] are relevant to participants in the refugee program at all levels."

Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate subcommittee on immigration and refugee affairs, sent a copy of Future Directions to Karl Zukerman, the chairman of InterAction's committee on migration and refugee affairs, with a letter saying, "While I don't necessarily agree with all of its recommendations, I do think it's a useful basis for discussion." Kennedy asked Zukerman and his InterAction colleagues to comment on the report as a preliminary to reauthorization of the Ref-

ugee Act. He said, "I hope to convene a hearing on this subject soon."

Report Recommends Increased Private Sector Role Despite finding that private sector involvement in refugee resettlement has eroded in recent years, the report recommends a refocusing of responsibilities for resettlement that would give the private sector increased responsibility for the initial period of refugee reception and placement.

Future Directions asserts that allowing the private sector to play such a role would increase the likelihood that more refugees would be diverted from dependence on public assistance. "By giving private agencies the resources to focus on all of the service needs of clients during a specified period of time, more refugees will become employed prior to accessing public services," the report maintains.

The study recommends a clearly delineated "time sequencing" of responsibilities by which private sector organizations would provide all services during an initial specified period, and States would then take responsibility for those refugees who do not become self-sufficient at the end of that time.

Fewer Refugees of More Varied Background Will Change the Character of Resettlement Services The report notes the changing character of refugee admissions to the United States as a primary reason for reassessing the private sector role. Increasingly, the report predicts, refugees admitted to the United States will represent a broader array of nationalities, skill levels, and household composition. Consequently, there will be greater chances of diverting refugees from reliance on public assistance. Anticipating smaller overall numbers of refugees being admitted, who in addition have higher skills, the report predicts that job placement will be easier in the future.

Part of the Future Directions assessment--consistent with its recommendation for a heightened private sector role--is that refugee-specific service systems will need to give way to placing refugees into mainstream social service programs. "With a smaller, more heterogeneous refugee population," the report says, "it will be very difficult to maintain a refugee-specific service system in many locations. If there are only a handful of clients who speak any given language, it is too expensive to hire bilingual workers to assist them. Also, if there is great diversity in skills...maintaining an appropriate range of job services within the refugee program will also be too costly."

As government resources become more constrained, and "mainstreaming" the most viable way to assist refugees, Future Directions suggests that there will be even greater needs for private sector attention and support. "As the refugee program diminishes in size, refugees will become lost in large bureaucracies." In a time when refugees will rely increasingly on mainstream services, the report says, "it is necessary to maintain some institutional base that can advocate on behalf of refugees and refer them to appropriate assistance." That role, the authors write, is the appropriate province of the private sector.

Health Insurance is Not an Insurmountable Obstacle to Refugee Self-Sufficiency The report is optimistic about the possibilities for finding satisfactory health coverage for employed refugees. It also insists that the success of private sector efforts to lead refugees to self-sufficiency will hinge on responding to the need for health coverage. "A key to the success of this private sector approach would be the ability of the private agencies to ensure health care coverage for the refugees they are to serve for the specified time period."

Refugee service providers consistently report that the potential loss of Medicaid and concerns about obtaining health services impedes many refugees from taking low-paying jobs, knowing that this will mean the loss of Medicaid benefits.

Resettlement workers, the report charges, "are often unaware of or make little use of Medicaid eligibility categories that allow low wage earners to continue their enrollment in the program even as cash assistance is terminated." The study found considerable variation in the ability of refugee service agencies to guide and assist refugees in health coverage options.

Future Directions offers several sugges-

tions for providing health coverage to low-income refugees. One of the suggestions for refugees who live in states where Medicaid cannot be obtained apart from cash assistance is to create a group insurance plan for refugees. The authors state, "For these refugees, we recommend that ORR explore the potential for 'pooling' uninsured refugees into a nationwide insurance plan that would lower the premium costs."

Future Directions discusses a variety of other problems and policy options. It includes research findings and policy options on overseas English language training and cultural orientation; reception and placement; placement policy; cash and medical assistance; and social services and targeted assistance programs.

The principal authors of Future Directions were Susan Forbes of the Refugee Policy Group, Timothy Eckels of Lewin and Associates, Inc., and Deborah Kogan of Berkeley Planning Associates.

The study is available upon request from Nguyen Nga at the Office of Refugee Resettlement, 330 C St., NW, Room 1229, Washington, DC 20201. (202) 245-1967.

Meetings and Conferences

° The eleventh annual legal conference on immigration and refugee policy sponsored by the Center for Migration Studies will be held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Washington, D.C., April 21 and 22. The registration fee for individuals before March 18 is $150. Special rates apply for government and non-profit agencies and academics. For more information, contact the Center for Migration Studies, 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island, NY 10304-1148. (718) 351-8800.

Resources

STATE DEPARTMENT REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES

The U.S. State Deparment released its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1987 in February. The 1,358-page report is a comprehensive survey of human rights practices throughout the world.

Below are excerpts from selected reports. All material is quoted directly.

Cuba In 1981 and again in 1983, the Government promised "amnesty" to a group of Cubans who had taken asylum in the Peruvian Embassy during the events that led to the Mariel boatlift in 1980. (Seeking asylum is a crime under Article 249 of the Penal Code.) Guarantees that the asylees would be allowed to depart Cuba were not honored, however.... [O]f the 17 persons who accepted this "amnesty," two are serving prison terms of 10 years, and none of the others have been permitted to leave the country... Three asylees still remain in the Peruvian Embassy after 7 years.... Cuba still holds as many as 80 long-term political prisoners, known as "plantados" for their steadfast refusal to accept reeducation and indoctrination. Jailed since the early days of the regime, a number of these are now in their 29th year of imprisonment.... During 1987 the Government continued to release some political prisoners and allow their departure from Cuba. By the end of September 1987, 105 former political prisoners had traveled to the United States.... Discussions between the United States Catholic Conference and the Cuban Government in May 1987 led to an agreement to release as many as 350 present and former political prisoners for travel to the United States. The United States agreed to accept those that qualified under its refugee guidelines. Efforts to ensure entry into the United States by most of those approved, and their family members, by the end of 1987 were hampered by Cuban government slowness in providing the documentation necessary to ensure that the persons are bona fide political prisoners.

El Salvador An estimated 322,000 people are displaced within El Salvador by the conflict, primarily from the northern and eastern zones. Another 167,400 are refugees in other Central American countries and in Mexico, and more than 500,000 are estimated to be illegal immigrants in the United States. As the level of violence falls, an increasing number of refugees are returning from abroad... The Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM), which met and maintained contact with some 9,530 returnees between December 1984 and December 1986 and

continued to meet Salvadorans deported from the United States in 1987, reported no evidence of government harassment of individuals returning to El Salvador from abroad, either from the United States or elsewhere.

Guatemala Guatemala has ceased to be a refugee-generating country and is now a refugee-receiving country.... Estimates of Nicaraguans living in Guatemala vary between 7,000 and 20,000, most of whom are in the country illegally. In addition, several thousand Salvadorans have come to Guatemala to seek jobs or to escape guerrilla warfare.

Haiti Economic migrants continue to leave Haiti, bound for destinations in the United States or for more prosperous areas of the Caribbean. Pursuant to a 1986 U.S.-Haitian agreement on the interdiction of undocumented migrants, around 3,000 illegal migrants were repatriated from international waters to Haiti by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1987.

Honduras Although conditions in the UNHCR camps are good, protection problems continue in the Salvadoran refugee camps and in some of the Nicaraguan Miskito settlements. There have been credible reports of forced recruitment and intimidation by political organizers linked to the Salvadoran guerrillas, in some cases to prevent voluntary repatriation. Although attempts by the Honduran Government to control such abuses in the camps are considered threatening by some outsiders, the Government continues to respect the authority of the UNHCR.

As a result of confrontations between Nicaraguan refugees and Hondurans livng in the Danli area, the Honduran Government closed the Jacaleapa refugee camp to visits without prior authorization and reviewed all previously issued travel permits for the refugees resident in this camp.

Cambodia Except for those who bribe their way out, the Heng Samrin regime routinely imprisons those caught attempting to flee, as well as those believed to be returning from border encampments affiliated with the CGDK. The Heng Samrin regime has agreed in principle to accept returning displaced persons from camps in Thailand, but has taken only one elderly woman so far because it has not reached an agreement with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the mechanics of repatriation.

Thailand Thailand, though not a signatory to international legal instruments regarding refugees and their basic rights, has acted in the spirit of those agreements in providing asylum to about 680,000 refugees from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam since 1975, and in permitting the temporary evacuation of around 270,000 Khmer, classed as displaced persons, onto its side of the Thai-Cambodian border. Thailand does not intend that the refugees remain in Thailand permanently, however, and, in the case of Lao refugees, during 1987 there were increasing indications that if resettlement in third countries is not possible, repatriation would be considered.

Thai policy has been to allow U.N.-coordinated assistance to be provided to refugees at first-asylum camps. Displaced Khmer are afforded temporary haven at border camps until safe repatriation can be arranged. Those in camps run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) number about 108,000.

In 1987 Lao highlanders often found it impossible to gain access to the Government's program (established in 1985) to screen individual Laotian arrivals. There were instances of unilateral expulsions by Thai officials of groups and individuals, primarily highland Hmong, who sought to enter Thailand. In March, 135 Hmong who had illegally crossed into Thailand were involuntarily repatriated to Laos, and in September, 24 lowland Lao seeking refugee in Thailand were pushed back into Laos where they were subsequently imprisoned by the Laotian Government. In November, 34 Hmong attempting to enter Thailand illegally were returned to Laos.

There were conflicting reports of a massacre, and the UNHCR has been invited to investigate the reports. This issue is complicated by the fact that some of these would-be entrants are Lao resistance elements rather than simple asylum seekers, as well as by the Lao Government's continuing hesitancy to accept back Laotians screened in Thailand and found not to be bona fide refugees.

In September, approximately 2,000 Burmese hill tribe people who had been living illegally in Thailand were repatriated to Burma. There have been reports of some vio-

lence associated with this repatriation.

Vietnam Refugees left Vietnam clandestinely during 1987 at a higher rate than in 1986. In part this was because a safer route opened across Cambodia.... Since 1975 ...90,000 former officials of the Republic of Vietnam Government have been detained in reeducation camps. Once released, these people face considerable discrimination.... The Government has oppressed ethnic Chinese by denying them employment and educational opportunity.

Romania In principle, the Goverment continues to oppose emigration for any purpose but family reunification and seeks to discourage those wishing to emigrate. The waiting period for Romanian emigration approval is still long: successful applications generally take between 1 and 5 years. The authorities sometimes refuse arbitrarily to accept emigration applications from some Romanians. However, the Government has permitted significant numbers of citizens to emigrate to the United States, Israel, and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Union of Soviet Socialist Republics Many Jews have waited in vain for 10 years or longer for permission to emigrate. Official Israeli sources estimate that there are approximately 370,000 Soviet Jews who have requested the letters of invitation (VYZOVS) necessary to apply to emigrate, and that many more Jews would eventually leave if emigration restrictions were lifted. However, a variety of administrative and extralegal sanctions, including loss of employment, harassment, social ostracism, and long delays, dissuade many Jews from even attempting to submit an emigration application.

Jewish emigration in 1987 totaled 8,155, up substantially from 914 in 1986, and the highest yearly total since 1981, when 9,447 Jews emigrated.... Many longtime refuseniks continued to be refused on grounds of security, however. The Supreme Soviet Presidium reportedly formed a commission to review security refusals, and a number of Soviet Jews, previously refused on security grounds, have been permitted to emigrate.

Pakistan Nearly 3 million Afghans have fled to Pakistan as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Government administers and supports over 300 Afghan refugee camps, incurring significant current and longer-term costs above the sizable amounts of relief supplies provided by various donors. The movement and employment of Afghans in Pakistan generally is not restricted, and many Afghans reside outside the refugee camps. Responding to public resentment and fears, the Government made extra efforts in 1987 to encourage refugees in urban areas to return to the camps....

Following the July fighting between Iranian groups in Karachi and Quetta, the Government has given closer scrutiny to its growing population of illegal immigrants from countries such as Bangladesh, Iran, and Sri Lanka. It has publicly vowed to shut off illegal immigration and return illegal immigrants to their places of origin.

RIGHTS GROUPS CRITIQUE U.S. RECORD

The Lawyers Committee for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch have published a critique of the Reagan Administration's human rights record in 1987, which serves as a useful companion to the State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1987.

The 294-page report includes a section on refugee, asylum, and immigration policy. It notes several positive developments during the year, including amnesty and liberalized asylum standards, but it does not extend credit to the Administration for these. "The victories that were won," the report says, "came largely over the legislative or judicial objections of the Administration."

The report charges that State Department reporting on human rights reflects foreign policy biases. The same biases, it says, are shown in setting refugee policy. "In its explanation of both the regional ceilings and the country-specific allocations for refugees, the State Department reflected the Administration's ideological bias by citing political repression as the cause of flight from communist nations, but not from noncommunist ones."

The Reagan Administration's Record on Human Rights in 1987 is available for $12 from Human Rights Watch, 36 W. 44th St., New York, NY 10036 or from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, 330 Seventh Avenue, 10th Floor N., New York, NY 10036.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU FOR REFUGEE PROGRAMS
Summary of Refugee Admissions, First Quarter of FY 88

COUNTRY OF CHARGEABILITY	FY ADMISSIONS AS of 12/31/87	FY 88 CEILING
AFRICA		
Angola	2	
Ethiopia	317	
Mozambique	1	
Somalia	3	
South Africa	1	
Tanzania	1	
TOTAL AFRICA	325	(3,000)
EAST ASIA--1ST ASYLUM		
Cambodia	24	
Laos		
Highland	1,263	
Lowland	227	
Subtotal Laos	1,490	
Vietnam		
Land and Boat	871	
Other	14	
Subtotal Vietnam	885	
EAST ASIA-1st ASYLUM	2,399	(29,500)
ODP	930	(8,500)
TOTAL EAST ASIA	3,329	(38,000)
EASTERN EUROPE		
Bulgaria	24	
Czechoslovakia	121	
Hungary	92	
Poland	781	
Romania	767	
Soviet Union	3,226	
Yugoslavia	3	
TOTAL EASTERN EUROPE	5,014	(15,000)
LATIN AMERICA		
Cuba	4	
Nicaragua	35	
TOTAL LATIN AMERICA	39	(3,500)
NEAR EAST ASIA		
Afghanistan	384	
Iran	1,589	
Iraq	11	
TOTAL NEAR EAST ASIA	1,984	(9,000)
GRAND TOTAL	10,691	(68,500)

REFUGEE REPORTS is published monthly for $28.00 per year for one subscription, $20.00 each for two or more subscriptions to the same addressee, or $20.00 each for ten or more subscriptions requested at the same time, mailed to separate addresses; overseas postage, $24.00 additional; by ACNS, 95 Madison Avenue, Third Floor, New York, NY 10016. Second Class Postage paid at New York and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to *Refugee Reports*, Sunbelt Fulfillment Services, P.O. Box 41094, Nashville, TN 37204.

Editorial comments and inquiries should be sent to: *Refugee Reports*, 815 Fifteenth Street NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20005. All communications regarding subscriptions should be sent to: Refugee Reports Subscriptions, Sunbelt Fulfillment Services, P.O. Box 41094, Nashville, TN 37204. (615) 377-3322.

Basic subscription rate for 12 issues per year: $28.00; Multiple-copy rate: $20.00; Single copies of back issues: $2.50.
Editor: Virginia Hamilton; Staff Writers: Bill Frelick, Court Robinson Joseph Cerquone
Distribution Manager: Carolyn Moore; Production Coordinator: Koula Papanicolas
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Refugee Reports

A Project of the American Council
for Nationalities Service
Sunbelt Fulfillment Services
P.O. Box 41094
Nashville, TN 37204

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